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FROM

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An Illustrated Companion

TO

The House of Commons

AND

.. The House of Lords . .



Col. Sir HOWARD VINCENT,

K.C.M.G., C.B., V.D., Aide-de-Camp to The King, M.P. for Central Sheffeld since 1885.

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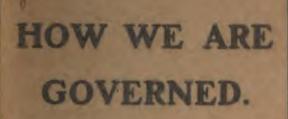
FROM











Guide for the Stranger to the Houses of Parliament.



THIRD EDITION.

VACHER & SONS, Westminster House, Great Smith Sivest. London, S.W.

TROS.

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PRINTED BY VACHER & S. WESTMINSTER HOUSE, GREAT S. LONDON, S.W.

The Parliaments of the World,

WHO IN THE

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

ARE PROMOTING THE CAUSE OF

INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP,

3s Dedicated

THIS LITTLE COMPANION TO THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER.

in which they are assembled,
in the sixth year of the reign of
KING EDWARD VII.,
"The Peacemaker,"

JULY, 1906.



A VISIT

TO THE

bouses of Parliament.

HE House of Commons is elected by voters on the Parliamentary Register of the United Kingdom. This register is compiled by local authorities, the agents of the political parties in the constituencies asserting or contesting the right of persons of their way of thinking to be thereon before the Revising Barrister, who visits each group of constituencies in the autumn. In 1832 was passed the Reform Act, materially extending the franchise, It was again enlarged, especially in Boroughs, in 1867, and again in Counties in 1884. At the present time the Parliamentary vote in the United Kingdom is possessed by male persons occupying land or a tenement of flo clear yearly value, who have resided for six months in the borough, or within seven miles thereof; by inhabitant householders, including occupiers in the course of their employment; by lodgers; and by persons qualifying under various statutes.

In theory, there is one Member of Parliament to every 100,000 persons, of whom from one-tenth to one-eighth have votes. But there is great inequality in the numerical strength of Constituencies, which a Redistribution Act will ere long have to remedy.

Women, although possessing great electoral influence, and taking an active part in political warfare, have only a Municipal and not a Parliamentary vote.

Elections are decided on one voting, by a bare majority.

Stephen, and dedicated to his namethe first martyr. You see at once, of minster Hall. It is 73 metres (234 metres broad, and 28 metres high, edifice was built some 800 years ago of The son of the Conqueror was Duke Maine, and Overlord of Brittany in Fra of England, and he wished to have a go of his proud position. The wooden of Richard II. (1377 to 1399), and is the beautiful of its kind in the world.

Parliaments have met here, and for used for the State pageants of the E the gracious permission of His Majes here offered, in 1905, to the French also welcome, in like manner and he the members of the Inter-Parliame Westminster Hall were held down to IV. the great coronation banquets. I scene of famous State trials, and Strafford and Laud, of Charles I., and Warren Hastings, Governor-General Coronary of the Edward Coronary Coronary

A brass marks the spot, on the low

Bench, the Exchequer, and the Common Pleas. Now they have been removed to Temple Bar, and their place taken by offices and committee rooms for the House of Commons.

At the extreme end is the Grand Doorway approached from New Palace Yard, where stand the motors and carriages of members of Parliament. To the south of New Palace Yard is a brass in the cloister recording the site of the Star Chamber Court founded in the third year of King Henry VII., and closed by the Long Parliament in 1641, by reason of the tyranny it exercised by the overriding beneath its gold-starred ceiling of the ordinary Courts.

To the north of Westminster Hall is a beautiful Chapel Crypt, but unused for Divine Worship, and also the Members' Cloak Rooms, with fine carved ceilings.

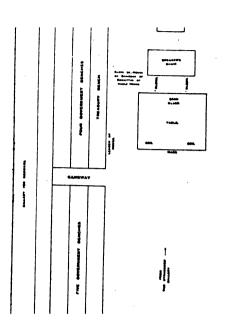
You pass then through a gallery occupying the site of the old House of Commons, burnt down* on Thursday, October 16th, 1834, which was none other than the before-mentioned chapel given by Edward VI. to the House of Commons for their chamber. It had been empty since Henry VIII. suppressed the Roman worship and scattered its endowments.

On either side are heroic statues of great statesmen who adorned that chamber—Somers and Selden, Burke and Grattan, William Pitt (note the likeness to Mr. Chamberlain) and Fox, while Hampden and Falkland look down over all.

Then you are in the Central or Octagon Hall, where strangers desiring to see members have to wait, great frescoes of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. David looking on them from 70 feet above. St. Patrick is to come. Visitors send in their cards, and frequently go away disappointed. Maybe their errand is to prefer

^{*} A great fire also devastated the Palace in the reign of Edward I.

(1272 to 1307), and again in 1512 in the reign of Henry VIII. In
the following century it was abandoned as a Royal Residence.





some request. Certainly they seek some small favour, and even for entrance into the House all cannot be satisfied, for there are barely 130 places for the 44,000,000 of people in the United Kingdom and the 360 other millions of the Empire. If you want a place for a lady, that is very difficult, and she has to sit apart from you.

You notice the statues of Lord Iddesleigh (formerly Sir Stafford Northcote), of Lord John Russell, of Earl Granville, statesmen almost of our generation, and of the great orator and parliamentarian the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, whose body lies with the illustrious dead in Westminster Abbey. And then, if you have by especial favour an order for one of the few seats "Under the Gallery" or "The Special Gallery," you pass through a frescoed corridor, illustrative of the great events in British history, to the Members' Lobby. There you see the Refreshment Bar on the right and on the left the Post Office. And alone, as yet, on the Statue Pedestals, the Right Hon. Sir William Vernon Harcourt.*

At the door leading to the Members' Cloister (see illustration) and Entrance sit "The Whips," members appointed by each party to "whip up" its members, to keep them to their duties, to prevent their leaving the House while it is sitting without "a pair," and on the Government side, to take care that there is always a Ministerial majority in or about the House. The House sits from 2.45 to 11 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. On Friday the House sits from 12 noon to 5 p.m. Then hon. Members scamper away to the country air for the fashionable week-end—some to their ancestral acres, some to their farms, some, alas, to lecture and make Sunday speeches as a source of income, forgetting their endorsement in Parliament of the Biblical injunction—one day's rest in seven.

A statue of Mr. John Bright is to be seen in the Lobby leading to the Committee Rooms, and opposite thereto a very fine bust of Oliver Cromwell.

proceedings of the People's R arrest them with the Royal the approach of the envoy of the by quaint forms.

A Bill or "Projet de Loi" has thrice by each House of Parl to discussion in Committee of t has to receive the Royal assenit is not convenient for the Kir missioners approved by His Ma

The ceremony takes place in

The Commissioners direct the Black Rod (usually a distinguto desire the presence of the I Commons have an immemor. before printing, it was highly in know what the new laws were, ances had been redressed. Thr. holds that post knocks at the c Rod. Convinced, by peering the

Now go to your Gallery if the House of Commons is sitting, and you have obtained an order by writing to your member a week before, and if he has been fortunate in the ballot for a seat on your behalf. The Chamber strikes you as very small. You will, I hope, receive much intellectual light. The material light by day comes from 12 stained glass windows bearing the arms of the 12 old Metropolitan Boroughs. By night it comes from gas screened by the skylight. Where can the 669 members find standing room, much less seats? You thought they "contested a seat," that they "won a seat," that "our member took his seat." Vain words. There are only some 430 seats including the upstairs Gallery, whence no one can speak, and yet the House is large enough! The fact is, except on important occasions, it is rarely full.

There is the Bar. The Bar! It has many meanings in the English tongue—one hilarious, one punitive, one professional, and one aquatic. But never was there a more imaginary bar than this. A piece of brown oilcloth in a carpet of cocoa matting! There is, indeed, a brass bar to be pulled out when wanted, but it appears, from the Gallery, almost as imaginary as "the seat."

Yet great things happen at this Bar! A newly-elected member stands at the Bar until called by the Speaker to advance with three solemn bows with his two introducers to the table and take the oath of allegiance. At the Bar new laws have their starting point and foundation. After leave to introduce a Bill has been given, the member in charge of it goes to the Bar, and is thence called by the Speaker "to bring it in" to the House. The modern craving for change has in practice rather confined this proceeding now to Government measures of importance. To the Bar also are summoned persons guilty of contempt of Parliament. The House of Commons has power to commit offenders to the Clock Tower, beneath the

Foreign legislative chambers are shape. Every deputy has his desk, tribune in front of the President. orations, often written and handed to t for the consummation of constituen latter, even in the United Kingdom, a great deal of useless talk and waste o like to see their member active, the l the conversational style of address to in the days of Burke, and even of Bri used often to prevail. This is promo of the slightest convenience for boo providing that notes in the low book 1 benches shall be brushed aside by a pa forbidding, in theory, that one who Speaker's eye" shall read his address.

Although no one knows the exact the vision of Mr. Speaker or the Chairn it is observable in practice that "his from one side of the House or from o to the other, and is often upset by a side "in" once in three or four calls, and then has to compete for "the eye" with many of his own side. All this time he must not leave his place, or some one with more assiduity may be preferred. There are two official sides—"Government and Opposition"—Unionists and Liberals. Then come Extreme Radicals and Labour members. Then the Irish Parliamentary Party. So, although there are not so many "groups" as in some foreign Parliaments—the French have 19 or 20—there are a good many, and all want an "innings" if they can get it. The most disciplined and homogeneous party is the Conservative, although even they include a few free importers. The friendly feeling between members is greatly promoted by having no fixed seats, and frequently changing neighbours.

You may now, in imagination, move up the House, not with three stately bows to the Speaker, as in the case of Black Rod, or the Sergeant-at-Arms, or new members, or members introducing Bills, or Tellers in a division, but simply, because you are invisible, and the House is unconscious of your presence. Stand on the steps of the Speaker's Throne, and survey the scene. To your right, on the front bench, sit the Ministers of the day, that is His Majesty's Government. It is called the Treasury Bench. Opposite thereto, to the left of the Speaker, is the Front Opposition Bench, where sit the ex-Ministers. Behind the Treasury Bench sit the supporters of the Party in power; opposite to them, the members of the Opposition. A narrow passage, or gangway, divides the seats on either side into two sections. Below the gangway to your right sit the more independent supporters of the Government. Below the gangway on the left of the Speaker sit the Labour members on the lower benches. Above them, unconcerned, so they say, with British parties, the Irish Nationalists have remained since the days of Charles Stewart Parnell. Immediately below them, in a high-backed chair, near

and its precincts, the a messon of strangers, and, lastly, the expulsion when so directed. This does not of course you would enjoy "a so

The most you can hope to s commit a breach of order by not the Speaker stands up, by comir and the member addressing the front of the Bar or in a gangway House in front of the Cha This hat fulfils many purposes. but not standing, you take it of speech refers to something you if Mr. Speaker calls your name, a number, through the Junior C motions or Bills, to show that yo to salute the Tellers in a Division respectful to wear a hat at custom had its origin in drau ago, and even still so, throug Gothic style.

a gallery or cage, with open ironwork in front. That is, until the Female Suffragists have their way,

THE LADIES' GALLERY.

There are 32 places, and for them members ballot day after day, the first 16 receiving two places. Many efforts have been made to get the "grille" removed, but they have all proved futile.

The Ladies, though, have one privilege. They are admitted to their "cage" half-an-hour before the House sits, and the early arrivals get the front places; for those at the back, besides being half suffocated, can neither see nor hear well. Yet the Ladies are privileged to see the hats or cards of those members desiring to be present at prayers, and thus be rewarded with a seat for the sitting, if between placing it and prayers such members lurk about "the precincts."

They also see the stately entry of Mr. Speaker and the Chaplain to the House, preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms bearing the Mace, followed by the Train-Bearer and Secretary, and they hear the solemn prayer that "the Counsels of the Nation may not be guided by private interests or affection."

Below the Ladies' Gallery is the Press Gallery. There are some 30 compartments or boxes, and of these two are reserved for the official reporters, and the remainder are assigned to the leading newspapers.

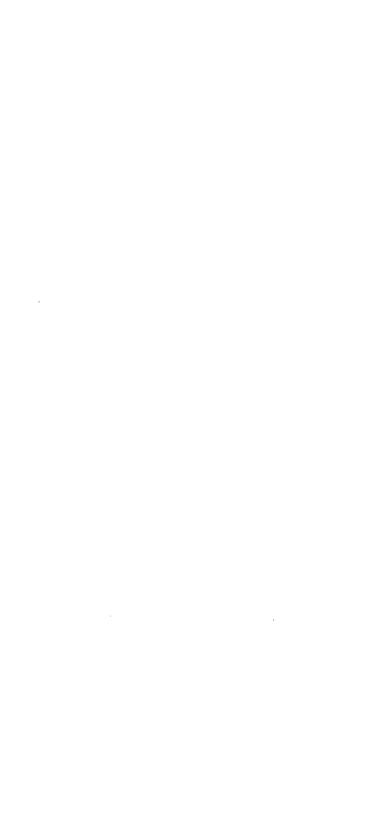
THE TABLE.

But one thing remains unnoticed, and that is the table. It is no ordinary table, but a massive piece of furniture, on which is placed the Mace, and behind it the Statutes of the Realm. It serves sometimes as a footstool for long-legged and lolling Ministers, or ex-Ministers, all unconscious of the bad impression the toes of their boots make on the

T Leader of the Oppositio box to hammer home his a are terrible blunderers, but the virtue.

Thus you see that the Bar the Mace are the corner ston ments. At the table, below t not in the full-bottomed wig personage himself wears, but King's Counsel. The senior Clerk of the House. His sea man when the House is in Co The distinction is, that when Speaker in the Chair no me once on the same subject. mittee, he can, if the House: or oftener. The Speaker or by name the member "who usually one from an opposit spoke last, or who has been r in the debate. The stage

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Lac to their reservations of the transfer of the House.

Il there is a latte site on front of the control te sand glass will enter the mittees puts a marking to hat opinion will be a conays, "I think the area d appears ionder non- 1 imment of the day a recoways assumed a recent matters - In the Whole a single areaded, as year the sand class to thee. mmittee order. 15. 15. ring in all the manner. ie, and passa. all out " lay, as wivate rooms d. g in from their one a ess, then teached the Hoters W. William schive support of gramma as on the first ly aperticable of aforem deve to

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alone. The "third reading," or fifth stage, is for the final approval of the House.

Still there is a little article unnoticed. It is on the table in front of the centre clerk's seat. It is a twominute sand glass. When the Speaker or Chairman of Committees puts a question, he says, "As many as are of that opinion will say 'Ay,' the contrary 'No." He says, "I think the 'Ayes' have it," if the volume of sound appears louder from the "Ayes," and as the Government of the day must always be in majority, it is always assumed to have the stronger lungs on Government matters. If the "Noes" want a division, they, or even a single member, may reply, "The 'Noes' have it." Then the sand glass is turned. The Speaker or Chairman of Committee orders the lobby to be cleared. The electric calls ring in all the libraries, smoking rooms, refreshment rooms, and passages. Then the policemen in the corridors all call out "Division." Then the Ministers come from the private rooms allotted to them, and obedient members hurry in from their writing or their reading, their draughts or chess, their tea on the terrace, or their dinner, and pour into the House. The Whips stand at the door, and as their respective supporters press in, tell them which way the Government or the Opposition is going to vote, and they nearly always follow their party, for party is, fortunately or unfortunately, the dominant factor in English political life. Without party no man can, in practice, obtain a seat, and to run for long counter to the majority of your party is almost impossible, for it means running alone.

When the sand has run out the doors are locked, the bells cease, and the Speaker, rising, puts the question again. If his view of the result is still challenged, he orders "Ayes to the right, Noes to the left," and names two Tellers for each.

The Ayes leave the House behind the Speaker's chair, and pass into the right hand division lobby, and after cally count each member as he passes his name having been previously ticked by a clerk. The division over, the Telle junior clerk at the table the number in e writes down the numbers, and hands the to the senior Teller of the winning side. stand then in the centre of the House fac and advance to the table with three bovictor reads the number aloud, and there of interest or importance, the winning si and again. The clerk hands the paper who again reads the numbers, and decla (or the Noes) have it."

Voting can only be in person. A d times forced not only as a record of opinion to constituents of assiduous attendance gislatures members can vote by proxynto an urn by a political friend or the hethe group—a capital plan, and very near

Thus ends the division—taking by t

a visitor, they will strike you also as very business-like. There are few arm-chairs about, and those there are do not look as if they were sat in. It is the fashion to speak of the House of Commons as a comfortable club. But if it was ever true, it is not so now. Members are subject to such perpetual interruptions from each other, from divisions, from strangers sending in to see them and wanting admission orders or something, it is most difficult settle down to serious work, and then you also want know what is going on.

THE BUFFET.

The Refreshment Rooms certainly have responded to be prevailing craze for cheapness. No distraction om legislative work in cards or billiards is permitted, but there is a Barber's Shop and a Bath. The new Parliaent has also started smoking in one of the libraries.

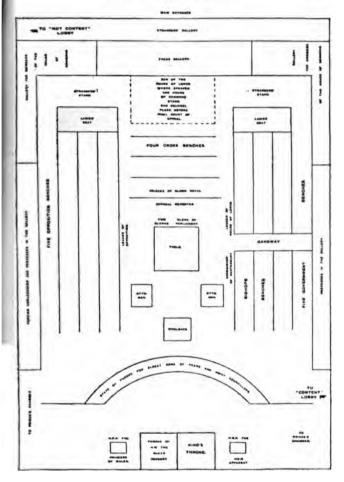
Below there is

THE TERRACE.

ou will go and see it. All the great ladies of London ant to come and have five o'clock tea there now, although he tables are few, the tea bad, and the wind generally old. But Father Thames presents from the Terrace a oble sight. There, to your right, is Lambeth Palace, he residence for many centuries of the Archbishops of Canterbury. Opposite is St. Thomas' Hospital, and to the eft Westminster Bridge. Stand with your back to the parapet and admire the noble Gothic architecture of Sir Charles Barry, and see the finest Parliament buildings in he world, the building of which was commenced in 1840 and finished in 1860 at a cost of £3,000,000, after preliminary opening by Queen Victoria in 1852. To the right, looking over the Terrace, is the residence allotted to the Speaker, who is elected by each Parliament for that Parliament, and who is usually rewarded by a peerage and a pension.

reoman Usher of the Black Rod has you to enter. Thence two handsome br entrance to the Upper House of Parlian once the origin of the expression, "The It is not quiet, and even sombre, like the profusely adorned with gilding, as bef which the Sovereign himself sits. Its be instead of green. It is a place of augu well as a place of business. Round it a of the Barons who compelled King Joh Charta.

See at the end the throne on which Queen Victoria the Good, of Blessed and (Empress of India—a seat of gold, raised chamber, surmounted by a canopy. No by King Edward VII. the Peacemaker. left is the throne of Her Majesty Queen the right of the King is the Chair of Stat Prince of Wales, the Heir Apparent; left, that of H.R.H. the Princess of Wale of the throne the eldest sons of peers and are privileged to stand during the sittings Lords. Immediately in front is the W comfortable looking red ottoman, on



PLAN OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

o political party. A few peers—including to peerage has been given as the final rew fficial service—claim like independence.

Behind the cross benches is the Bar. speaker and his attendant Members when House is summoned to hear the Royal assen he Bills agreed to by both Houses of the His Majesty's Commissioners sit in their rol and ermine on a bench in front of the Tl aise their cocked hats as the Clerk of the Ho heir style and titles in the Commission. Th eads the title of the Bill, and, with low re n Norman French, "Le Roy le veut." T the Bill which has gone through five stages i into an Act of Parliament. At the Bar ple King's Counsel before the Lord Chancellor an created life peers as Lords of Appeal, and the House of Lords in its capacity as the appeal for the whole Empire.

The divisions in the House of Lords are tal

content" lobby, turn to the left through the Princes' Chamber, which serves the Lords an an ante-room library, and admiring a fine statue of Queen Victoria in her robes, as well as paintings on the wall of Henry VIII. and all his wives, pass into the Royal Gallery.

Here it is that in July, 1906, are assembled, by leave of the King, the representatives of the Parliaments of the world in the cause of International Peace and Friendship. Their official language is French.

This is the way His Majesty comes when the State coach, drawn by the eight cream-coloured horses, has drawn up at the Royal entrance. Through serried ranks of the greatest in the land a lane is kept by the Yeomen of the Guard for the passage of the King of Great Britain and Ireland, and Emperor of India, preceded by our Sheffield friend, His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, K.G., Hereditary Earl-Marshal of England, to open the labours of "His Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons in Parliament assembled."

On either wall are the immense frescoes representing—the one the Death of Nelson and the hoisting of his last signal to his sailors, as to us, "England expects every man to do his duty,"—the other the famous meeting after the victory of Waterloo between the Duke of Wellington and Marshal Blucher at the farmhouse which bore the appropriate name of La Belle Alliance. They represent pages of National History, and as such cannot be hid from view, much as present friendship and happier relations with our nearest neighbour might suggest such a course. Then you can see the Royal Robing Room—assigned as the Committee Room of the Inter-Parliamentary Union—which the Sovereign enters from the Grand Staircase, after arrival at the Main Entrance, opposite the statue of Richard the Lion-Hearted.

Indeed, if you are a Saturday visitor when the House is not sitting, you yourself enter in the same way, having

ourteous Metropolitan Police.

GENERAL OBSERVATIO

The life of the House of Commons is l even years. In practice it rarely exten our years. This is seen by the fact of t f Commons having been the 16th Pa uring the past 70 years. Contrary to ailing in every foreign country, and ind olony, Members of the Parliament of t om receive no salary or allowance of ublic funds. Nor can they be gran ravelling expenses as a member of a Co olding a Parliamentary office (Secretary ecretary, Lord of the Treasury) under 1 ppointed directly by the Crown, and no e-election has to take place, in proof pprove the choice of the Sovereign, or, 'rime Minister.

In former times an election was very e or boroughs in which the will of some



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GENERAL OPSTICATION

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occur in electoral areas, leading to the over-representation of some and the under-representation of others, a Redistribution Act becomes necessary every 20 or 25 years. It is now overdue, for there are members sent to Parliament by 1,500 electors and others by over 30,000. The Emerald Isle comes out topside in this strange arrangement.

The past century is noteworthy in a Parliamentary sense, not only by the extension of Parliamentary institutions throughout the world (Turkey alone in Europe being without them), but also in the frequent extension of the franchise.

The masses are now the determining force, and, thank God, they are loyal and patriotic as a whole.

These are those who return the House of Commons. The party therein which has the majority decides the Government, because by its authority alone can taxes be levied and apportioned to the service of the State.

An Administration in a minority in the House of Comznons cannot continue in power, because it can get no znoney to carry on the work of the country.

The House of Lords, having no authority in financial matters, is in a different category, and only indirectly effects the Government by refusing to sanction Bills sent up to it by the House of Commons, or insisting upon reatly altering them in detail.

It is seldom, however, that the House of Lords resists the real will of the nation. But it affords the nation time to think over any fundamental proposal, before finally committing itself thereto at the suggestion of a man of passion or in a vein of enthusiasm. The Upper House consists of men of great experience, of wide culture, with a great stake in the peace and well-being of the country. Constantly recruited from the vanguard of intellectual and scientific progress, of commerce and finance, of those who have rendered

neers have no sons, and are therefore cords, only tenants for life. If elect uccessfully claim, as foreign senates, with the Commons.

A Bill which does not get through all ession has to begin them again in the r ard on eager promoters, but operate nischievous legislation.

In practice it is now almost impossible 3ill through the House of Commons unline Government, for the latter has prache whole time, except on Fridays in the fa Session, when the sitting is assigned the 300 members wishing to bring in Bil

There are, of course, private Bills promions, Railway and other Companies, surposes. These are examined by Commit counsel appear. Their promotion is verified by the promotion is verified by the promotion of the promotion is verified by the promotion of the promotion is verified by the promotion of the promotion

Inquiries are carried out by the House of Commons by Select Committees

delegate the third or Committee stage of a Bill, so as to save time in the consideration of clauses and details.

The business of the House of Commons, except on Fridays, begins by questions of which written notice has been given, and which are printed with the Orders of the day. Questions marked with a star are for oral answer, and must have 48 hours' notice. Those unstarred are answered by written communication printed with the votes. These questions are a great check upon administrative action. There is, in fact, no grievance which cannot be ventilated in this way, and if sometimes the privilege is abused, it affords an undoubted safety valve for the public. A question, a speech, and the moving of a resolution on a Tuesday or Wednesday early in the Session are, besides voting, the principal functions of private members. Custom even more closely limits the duties of subordinate members of a Government, who never address the House save at the request of their Chief, or of the Leader of the House, or in answer to a question affecting their particular duties.

But, even if the power and influence of a Member of Parliament have been curtailed, and his privileges removed, let us hope that, as now, it may ever be the honourable aspiration of men of intellect and independence, of means and experience, to take their share in the public life of the Empire, not for the advancement of private aims or for the interests of a faction, but for the greatest good of the greatest number, and to the end that the integrity and prosperity of the Dominions of Britain throughout their continents, territories and islands, washed by every ocean, and holding the gates of the seas, may be secured for our children's children.

C. E. H. V.

Those desiring further information concerning "Parliaments, Past and Present," will do well to consult the interesting work written under that name by Messrs. Arnold White and Philip Smith, and published by Hutchinson & Co., Paternoster Row, London.

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